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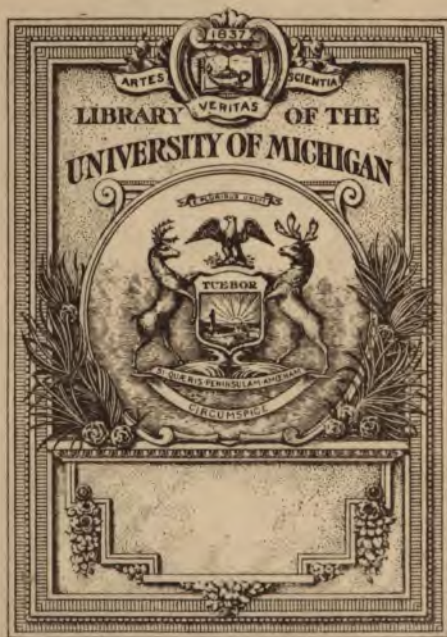
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THE ETHICS
OF THE
NEW EDUCATION

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PRESTON W. SEARCH

The Ethics
... OF THE ...
New Education



BY
Preston W. Search

AUTHOR OF
"AN IDEAL SCHOOL"

A. FLANAGAN COMPANY
CHICAGO



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LITTLE BOOKLET, IN REMEMBRANCE, IS DEDICATED**

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THE ETHICS
OF THE
NEW EDUCATION

BY PRESTON W. SEARCH

This is a day of earnest educational awakening. Intelligent thought, within and without the teacher's profession, is being applied to the teacher's work. The demands of the American public, the helpful discussions of community club-organizations, and the work of progressive teachers everywhere are rapidly raising the standard of the secondary schools. The kindergarten is contributing its genial spirit all along the line, while the university is intensely interested in the development of the best

lower-grade schools. The discussion of the Herbart Club, the investigations in child-study, and the doctrine of individualism have been turning inward the eyes of schoolroom methods. The American magazines are full of earnest criticism, which the better school men are receiving at its proper value. But of all questions that are and can be propounded there is one of supreme importance, growing more and more out of the trend of economic considerations; and that is, *What is the ethical value of school-room results? In what way are the public schools lifting the children of America to a higher as well as a broader plane of life?*

This is a vital question, for the public schools represent the spirit and foundation of our nation's life. The home is of too unfortunate an average standard to present at large a high ideal; the Church is too limited in its range of contact; but the public schools, with their seventeen millions of children, represent the integral life of tomorrow's promise, and have a responsible

opportunity for the making of men and women, and for determining the future of the republic. Therefore, the great, the vital question of the educational world is, What are the schools doing toward the making of character? For this is the supreme end of all education. If the public schools are not giving a moral, as well as an intellectual and physical development; if they are not lifting mankind to a higher standard of life, then they are not meeting the requirements of their mission and have no right to their place in our national economy. We are in the midst of a sea of perils—the tendencies to so-called socialism, communism, and the materialistic—our tramp life and the parasitic elements attaching themselves to the industrial movements of the day. But these perils cannot be met by a nation adrift. There must be a rudder to our Ship of State; and that rudder must be character in citizenship, which is possible only as the direct product of educational effort.

The charge is frequently heard, advanced by those who have not caught the spirit of

modern education, that "the public schools are godless schools." This is cheap doctrine, arising from failure to comprehend the life-earnestness and consecration which faithful teachers bring to their work, or from contact with schools of ignoble kind.

Now I hold, essentially and fundamentally, to a complete separation of the Church and the State; but there is one thing to be remembered—this is a nation founded in religious faith and characterized by the recognition of a Supreme Intelligence. This is not a nation of agnosticism. The planting of the cross by the followers of Columbus; the consecration of the Pilgrim Fathers; the precedent prayer of the framers of the Declaration of Independence; the historic prayer of Washington at Valley Forge; of Lincoln in another night of national gloom; the appeal of Garfield to the frenzied mob in New York; the national recognition of Thanksgiving Day and of Christmas as legal holidays; the universal celebration of the birthday of Christ—which if any man doubt, let him go walk

side; the
enforced
the "As
customary
the time-
he Presi-
his chair;
gislatres
with prayer; the chaplains
in the army and navy, and in all State in-
stitutions of penalty and reform; the many
State mottoes; the "Anno Domini" of
every commercial and social piece of paper
of the entire land, and by which even the
infidel subscribes to the divinity of Christ;
and the coin, of current use, expressing the
underlying faith of the Republic in the tal-
ismanic words, "In God we Trust"—these,
and many other characteristics, indispu-
tably evidence that this nation—the Amer-
ican nation—is fundamentally and forever
a Christian nation, and as such has a right
to the recognition of God in the public
schools. I like the teacher free from re-
ligious cant and denominational bias; but,

at the same time, I admire the one who, in viewing creation, does not close his eyes to glimpses of the Creator, and who does not hesitate to look up from "Nature to Nature's God." This is not sectarian in principle, and is thoroughly indorsed by State Constitutions ordinarily thought to be suppressive. Freedom and liberty and national practice demand that the teacher, in his work, shall have the right to the recognition of God's sovereignty; and many more than the people think are they who permeate their work with such vivifying essence.

But while the idea of God has its entitled place in schoolroom recognition, I do not believe ethics is best taught as a creed. During the past few years quite a number of text-books on ethics have been published for use in the secondary schools. Such instruction has little more than Lilliputian value. Ethics cannot be taught from the outside. Ethical training cannot be something of extraneous character, but must be an integral part of every exercise of daily life—the at-

mosphere in which one lives—the spirit which one breathes. With this view of the question, the public schools are pre-eminently the place where opportunity is given for character-building; and if in any respect the output has been unsatisfactory, it behooves the people to be awake to the necessity of providing conditions that will make all the more powerful this fundamental factor of the American republic. /

Now let us consider a few cardinal features of the public schools that tend toward ethical culture.

There is an ethical value in activity. “An idle brain is the devil’s workshop” is not only a trite saying but a truism. While an active child may become a doer of evil, his chances of such outcome are not one per cent. of those of the lazy boy whose life is a ready prey for the invasions of the infesting vermin of immorality. There is hope of an active man, for activity is the essential principle of life; but the lazy man—what company is there that would insure his chances for heaven?

There is an ethical value in order. It is
"Heaven's first law." Now this is a point
of pre-eminent importance. The most ex-
pensive thing in all educational and indeed
in all divine economy is disorder. Well does
a superintendent hesitate to have his own
child in a disorderly school. Why? Be-
cause disorder is immoral. Very frequently
a disorderly school appears, but the cry is,
"Give the teacher a chance!" Every fair-
minded school executive is willing to give
almost any teacher an extended chance, ex-
cepting the teacher in a disorderly school;
but there is somebody else who must have
a chance, and that person is the child. The
loss of respect for authority, the conscious-
ness that there is something smart in evad-
ing the teacher and in doing wrong, the
encouragement to deception and dishonesty
—these, and a hundred other elements in a
disorderly school, make for the unmaking
of character. Let it be emphasized that dis-
order is immoral, while the opposite of such
conditions tends to ethical development.
Now the order which is here deemed so

desirable is not the old-time dead order of inspirationless form and absolute quiet, where the normal activities of life gave place to the more important ticking of the clock, but that happy condition of vitalized workers most favorable for the performance of work. That prohibition of whispering and other arbitrary exactions are immoral is more than susceptible of proof. Order to be of ethical value must be of a natural character.

There is an ethical value in habit. It is habit that forms us, that makes us or damns us. It is not God that says, "Thou shalt not be saved," but habit which renders the soul impervious to salvation. In sin, the primary effect upon the sinner is never so great as the secondary. The boy who runs away from school does wrong, but the sin he then commits is not nearly so great as the ones he will commit before the day is over. It is the mission of the school to form correct habit, to give correct thinking and to influence the placing of one's life in conformity to that which is true and good.

There is an ethical value in association.

I admit that association under inactive, disorderly circumstances and conditions of improper habit is immoral ; but, on the other hand, the child brought up by himself is fearfully unfortunate in his moral tendencies. The highest type of manhood is not developed in solitude, nor under circumstances of riotous imagination, but face to face with the realities and temptations of life. The country boy who seems so sturdy will fall sooner than the town boy when subjected to the temptations of city life. The old-time separation of boys and girls in schools and in seminaries had its fearfully expensive results, which disappeared largely in the presence of co-education. We all need association, and in the associations of the public schools there is a purifying influence not easily estimated. True, there are parents who are reluctant to send little children to the public schools because of fear of taint; but such persons have known little of the character and possibilities of the better school. There are, no doubt, objection-

able things that appear even in good schools; but compared with the things which will go wrong in model homes, it is a wonder that the superior results are so pronounced in the public schools.

Literary culture has its value in the formation of character. The analysis or framing of a pure sentence, the contact with a lofty thought, the appreciation of a noble sentiment, all give color to the better tastes. A man cannot sing a verse of "Home, Sweet Home," and at the same time commit a crime. A child cannot read the selection in his reader entitled "The Mysterious Stranger," by Jane Taylor, without being struck with man's ingratitude to God. The reading of "Black Beauty" leaves an indelible impression upon the mind and the heart. In the same way, it may be said, there are *ethical* values in all good studies and mental activities. The beauties of literature proper and of choice language; the inculcation of noble sentiment; the impulse that comes from thought-contact with the lives of the great and good; the philosophy

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this being done; but the world has made great strides during these latter years. There is no saving grace in a long face *per se*. On the other hand, a joyous spirit is one of God's best gifts. Play in children is a divine expression. The school recess has been understood to be so many minutes for pure air and for a "let go" exercise. It should be an educational opportunity for moral development through play. There is nothing on the school premises so fruitful in demoralization as the standing around of school children, or grouping together, with nothing to do. On the other hand, play, sport, and romp, under proper direction, have inestimable value. They bring to the surface the pure joy of the inner life and bless childhood with God's best beneficence—the sunshine of his smile. It will do any older man good to stand in the presence of children and see them play—it will bring better thoughts to the hardened heart—earnest participation will do anybody good.

In all the particulars already specified the public schools are making character of

a higher order. But there is another and even a more powerful factor in ethical training, and that is *motive*; the principle underlying action, the determinative volition that leads to formative results. This indeed belongs more properly in discussion to the disciplinary factors, but it so far transcends all the rest that it is here given a major place for the sake of greater emphasis.

The old-time idea was that the child must bring his life into conformity to requirement. Not *can*, but *must*, was the principle of action. The teacher with eyes in the back of his head was the best teacher. There was no choice, no volition, no spontaneity—all was repression and enforced obedience. It was taken for granted that the child disliked school, that the pursuit of knowledge was distasteful, and that there was no safe way for the master to maintain his place, excepting by breaking the will of the disobedient pupils. Growing out of this spirit came a long line of false incentives, which for years were all powerful in sway; and their ghosts still walk in many schoolrooms,

and even in some Sabbath-schools at the present day. This reference is to rewards of merit, the keeping-in at recess on so many demerit marks, to prizes, percentages, honor places, discriminating rankings, and a hundred other inventions of the Evil One. The child who is taught to work for a prize, be it even in committing to memory passages of the Scriptures, is bribed, and, to that extent, corrupted. He is not taught to love truth because of its own beauty. There grows up within him, not pure love for the thing presented, but a desire for something unnatural, something selfish, something temporary. The child taught to work for a per cent. never rises higher than his motive. He may work himself to a frenzied heat in his all-pervading desire to be first or to gain a high marking; but such a student remains not a worker after such unnatural stimulus is gone. He has passed his objective; his love for work dies stillborn. Hence, all such incentives are false to the spirit of education and are immoral in their tendencies.

I have been thirty-five years in the school-room as pupil and teacher; have lived a good part of that time (with regret be it said) in the atmosphere of prizes and per cents.; have watched their false spur and unnatural coloring of character; have looked upon noble ambition perverted to things abnormal; have seen the physical, intellectual, and moral wreckage that ensued; and, as the result of personal investigation and personal experience, I do not hesitate to pronounce the whole system of incentives to which reference has been made as abnormal, unprofitable, false, and immoral. Their entire tendency is to temporary result, to stifled interest, to the recognition of an unnatural means as an end, to the development of a selfish spirit, and to dishonest practice, as well as to over-pressure, and over-nervous and over-physical strain.

What should be given the child in their stead? Nothing but a higher motive; and that is, to work from pure love for work and because it is right. It is false to say the pursuit of knowledge is unattractive. There

is not a boy or girl in all the world who cannot be touched by the right teacher. He may be lost in the mechanical school; but, in the presence of spirit and an encouraging smile, the barren wastes of fruitless endeavor spring into vernal life, and the beginning is made for a richer realization.

The fact is, only our methods of approach are distasteful—truth is always attractive. The rich realm of learning is full of pure delight. The so-called bad boy needs some one to start the machinery of his life into operation—to find for him a field of interest and to give him inspiration. In the presence of the true teacher—not the school-keeper, but the teacher—there is the warming into life of the dormant germ of divinity, and the best of all results become possible under the influence of true motive. To think otherwise would make a skeptic of the believer in education. Interest; *interest!* What a world of possibility and delight is being unlocked by this key to the salvation of the uninterested and lost!

The public schools, under the practice of

proper motive, give excellent opportunity for the cultivation of an unselfish and generous spirit. With the removal of the desire to surpass others for the bare sake of being ahead, there comes an interest in others' welfare, and cultivation is given to the true spirit of true socialism. The kindergarten has brought a rich contribution to the public schools in this particular. The Thanksgiving offering, now the happy custom of many schools, is intended least of all for the good it will do the poor, although that is considerable; but it is a means to a greater end in the education of the child.

Consideration has been given to the motive involved in *study*; let us now direct attention to the motive belonging to *government*. All true government must be self-government. There can be no such thing as substitution of endeavor or responsibility. "Self-effort alone has educational value; to direct self-effort is teaching." Even so in a school government, the *Ego* must have opportunity for determination. As already stated, the school of the old education

was all repression and authority. There was no recognition of the *Will* as an immortal part of the child, appealing for education. There was no spontaneity, no choice. There might have been order of a kind, but it was enforced order. If the teacher, or even the college professor, was late, the students "bolted." If the teacher was called without the door, the school was bedlam.

Not so in the school of appeal to higher motive. There the thing presented is the *law*, not in its majesty, but in its *beauty*. The child is taught to realize that harmony is the sole end of all requirement. Offending, he stands in the presence of the broken law. His act has disturbed the entire relations of the school, has brought discord where should have been harmony, and in consequence others are unhappy. Sin is a heinous thing, making us unlovable and unloving. As such, and because it violates the principles of eternal right, it removes us far from the sunshine of one another's enjoyment and of God's smile. How much better it is for us to be true to our relations in the

school and in God's economy! How dependent upon our individual action is the harmony of all about us, and how we contribute to the sunshine of all who know us when we are faithful to our individual responsibility!

I like the inspiration involved in the thought that the teacher expects, not forces, every child to do his duty. Such a spirit saved England in the days of Lord Nelson, when he said, "England expects every man to do his duty"; raised France to her high position during the period of Napoleonic glory, when that daring leader cried out, "Men of France, the eyes of thirty centuries are looking down upon you"; and it is just as powerful as an incentive when applied to calling forth the nobler principles of the child heart. Personal responsibility belongs just as much to the child as to the maturer person. Many a man has been saved by responsibility, and this may be the case with the child.

For this reason I do not like watching children, and the employment of detective

characteristics. On the playground the teacher should be present, but more because of interest in the children's happiness and participation in their games. Of every child there should be expected his duty; and he should be given the utmost confidence until he proves himself unworthy; and even then he should be forgiven "until seventy times seven."

The schoolroom should be characterized by natural order and self-reliant strength. No school is ever organized for effective work until self-government is possible. The teacher's place in the room is as the inspiring director of the children's endeavor; but should the teacher be called for a time from the room, the school so trained continues its perfect order. As superintendent, the writer once had a school of fifty pupils that ran itself for eleven weeks without a teacher; but, let it be said, such a condition is not the result of corporal punishment and other pernicious methods of appeal. Self-reliance, independence, and character itself come from within, not without; and never

until a child is so taught to work, is he safe for the duties of life and of citizenship. There must be utilization of the will, there must be determining choice, or self-reliant, trustworthy character will not be the product of the schools. The school must be in miniature what God has made the entire world to be—a place where character is formed, not by arbitrary requirement, not by fatalism, but by responsible choice.

I have already referred to the ethical opportunities presented by association, but there is a factor not yet directly discussed, and that is the *teacher*. There are teachers, and there are others who unfortunately enter that holy office. It is not intended to say that all teachers who fall short of the high results described are failures. Far be it from such a conclusion, for there is many a faithful worker, doing valiant service for humanity, who stands discouraged at many an evening hour over the work of the day; but this much is implied, that the greatest teacher is the one successful as outlined. There are teachers in whose very presence

is delight. The child feels the inspiration of a great life, and is influenced accordingly. Such a teacher is an effective apostle of a better living, and gives an uplift and an impulse to the student's life that cannot be measured this side of eternity. After all, it is not so much a question of the Bible in the school as it is a question of the teacher with the Bible in her heart. Such a teacher glorifies her vocation and leaves immortal impress upon all she touches.

What a glorious thing to the child to be permitted contact with such a personality--and there are many of them! Under such direction how all the world opens up with a diviner light! Duty faithfully performed in the schoolroom brings its conscious happiness. Under true motive the various departments of work assume a higher character. The true spiritual being finds expression, and all the world takes on a higher manifestation of law, of order, of beauty, and of God.

As this article was in the simmering process, I stood one day in a schoolroom, at-

tempting to apply the ethical query to the work I saw in progress. What, after all, I thought, is the value of the schoolroom exercises in the making of character? Is it possible I overestimate the glimpses the child gets of that which is divine even in his day-school work? Environed as the teacher often is by the appearance of agnostic sentiment, is there opportunity to leave with the child the realization of God, purely through the ordinary realm of school studies? As I was thus querying, I saw a little girl of eleven years busy in a language exercise. Stepping to her side, I leaned over her desk and saw these beautiful words flowing, in reproduction, from her pen:

God hath a presence,
And that you may see
In the fold of a flower,
The leaf of a tree;
In the sun of the noonday,
The star of the night;
In the storm of the darkness,
The rainbow of light;
In the waves of the ocean,
The furrows of land;

